Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-12 (withdrawn)

13. (presently amended) A stereoscopic microscope comprising:

a common close-up optical system that faces an object, said close-up optical system having one and only one optical axis;

a pair of imaging optical systems that take object light rays passing through the different regions of said close-up optical system, respectively, to form a pair of images, the optical axes of said imaging optical systems being parallel to the optical axis of said close-up optical system;

an image taking device that captures said images formed on an image taking surface thereof,

wherein said common close-up optical system comprises a first lens and a second lens on the side of the object, wherein said first lens is prior to said second lens on the side of the object, and wherein said first lens has a negative power and said second lens has a positive power,

wherein said close-up optical system satisfies the following condition (1);

(1) $f_A > 500$

14. (original) The stereoscopic microscope according to claim 13, wherein said imaging optical system comprises:

a pair of zoom optical systems that take object light rays passing through the different regions of said close-up optical system, respectively, to form a pair of primary images, the optical axes of said zoom optical systems being parallel to the optical axis of said close-up optical system;

a pair of field stops that are arranged at the positions of said primary images;

a pair of relay optical systems that relay said primary images to form a pair of secondary images; and

an inter-axis distance reducing element that brings the object light rays from said relay optical systems close to each other.

Claim 15 (withdrawn)

- 16. (new) The stereoscopic microscope of Claim 13 wherein said common close-up optical system collimates the object light rays from the object of which image is to be captured by said image taking device.
- 17. (new) The stereoscopic microscope of Claim 13 wherein said second lens is movable along its optical axis for focusing.